

The background of the cover is a deep purple color with a pattern of white puzzle pieces. Some pieces are missing, creating a sense of incompleteness or a path forward. The puzzle pieces are arranged in a way that suggests a larger picture is being assembled.

TogetherBC:

British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

In 2018 Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada began a comprehensive review of the Market Basket Measure (MBM) to update the base measure established in 2008-2010. This process resulted in changes to the MBM that better reflect current living expenses and consumption patterns. The data for the 2018-base MBM was released on September 8, 2020, just as this report was being finalized. Consequently, this report will still present the 2008-base MBM data that was used during the 2019 calendar year. The next report, to be released by October 2021 will use the 2018-base MBM. The Province looks forward to working with the federal government on improving the availability of population-based data, including measures for Indigenous people and people with disabilities, to further enhance the effectiveness of the MBM.

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Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present the first annual report of TogetherBC, British Columbia's poverty reduction strategy.

The report is an important step in implementing TogetherBC. It provides critical accountability for our government's multi-ministry poverty reduction strategy, which is focused on removing barriers, creating opportunities and putting people first.

Poverty reduction was our first priority when I was appointed Minister in 2017.

At that time British Columbia was Canada's only province with no poverty reduction strategy. We also had some of the worst poverty rates in the nation with over a half million people living in poverty, including 99,000 children.

Our strategy committed in legislation to reduce overall poverty by 25 per cent and child poverty by 50 per cent within five years. The strategy, however, is much more than these numbers. TogetherBC is built on the understanding that reducing poverty means addressing the ways that people are held back from opportunities, excluded from their communities and squeezed by unaffordability. It means breaking the cycle of poverty, an extremely difficult challenge for those who are facing the struggle of poverty for themselves and their families.

Sadly, we know that poverty does not affect all people equally. Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities, LBGTQ2S+ people and others who face discrimination and racism also face higher rates of poverty. If we truly want a more fair and inclusive society, reducing poverty needs to be a foundational aspect of that commitment.

I am proud of the progress we have made. The strategy builds on the principles of Affordability, Opportunity, Reconciliation and Social Inclusion. Our progress was made through significant investments in child care, housing, income assistance rates, minimum wage, and greater access to skills and employment training. We did an overhaul of many of the punitive regulations and legislative restrictions that hurt people and held them back unnecessarily. We helped 136,000 people including 42,000 children escape poverty by the end of 2018.

There is more work to do. This challenge has been compounded by COVID-19. We know the issues that often underly poverty have been magnified by the pandemic. From the outset of our work I have said one ministry or one government cannot defeat poverty on their own. It takes all levels of government, community, business and labour working together if we are to be successful. That will certainly be true if we are to overcome the negative impacts of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable citizens.

My thanks to all those who have committed to the progress of TogetherBC. Your efforts and belief in the importance of poverty reduction cannot be overestimated. I especially want to thank the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee chaired by Catherine Ludgate for their advice, hard work and unwavering dedication to reducing poverty in our society.

Together, we can create a province that has the well-being of everyone at its heart. TogetherBC is an integral step in that process.

Shane Simpson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction



Message from the Parliamentary Secretary

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Poverty Reduction, I have worked alongside the Minister, the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee and the many organizations and people working to reduce poverty in our province. In this report, the work that has already been done is reflected in programs and policies across government, as well as in the collaboration and teamwork of organizations, communities and individuals.

TogetherBC, B.C.'s first poverty reduction strategy, recognizes the power of collective action to make life better for people. It brings together solutions to address poverty from across all levels of government, community organizations, Indigenous leaders and communities, and importantly, from people who live in poverty.

The issues in poverty are intersectional, and the policies and programs that we develop must directly support the vulnerable population groups that are more likely to face barriers. Now more than ever, we need to focus on the complex and systemic issues in poverty, address inequities and continue to create programs that are welcoming, culturally safe and non-discriminatory.

This report gives us an opportunity to not only share the ways that we have worked to reduce poverty in 2019, but an opportunity to share some of the individual journeys of British Columbians – their struggles and their achievements, and how these program and policies were able to support them in a time of need.

It is important to note that this report outlines programs, policies and initiatives in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic affected families, businesses and communities in B.C., particularly already vulnerable populations. The road ahead is a challenging one, with thousands of British Columbians facing new challenges with the impacts of COVID-19. This work is now more important than ever.

TogetherBC, and the work we have already accomplished, is based on a vision that every British Columbian should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and feel included in a prosperous and healthy province. We will continue to put people first and build a brighter future to make life better for everyone.

Mable Elmore
Parliamentary Secretary for Poverty Reduction

Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee Independent Commentary

The Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee was appointed by Minister Simpson in 2019. The independent committee advises the minister on matters related to poverty reduction and prevention. Membership includes British Columbians with a range of backgrounds including advocates, stakeholders and people with lived experience of poverty. One important role of the committee is to assess the progress of government actions taken to meet the targets and timelines set out in B.C.'s first *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*.¹ The committee provided the following commentary for the 2019 annual report.

Actions Taken in 2019 to Reduce Poverty in B.C.

The actions taken to implement the legislated poverty reduction strategy are designed to reduce income poverty primarily via income support programs, and to improve well-being in five other priority areas: housing; families, children and youth; education; employment; and social supports. A broad range of programs are detailed in this report, with the specific numbers of people affected by those programs. Here, we highlight a few that stand out, paying specific attention to actions of relevance to Indigenous people and communities.

Housing:

Across B.C., the calls for safe and affordable housing are loud and clear. Support by governments at all levels has been insufficient over many decades, and only recently have provincial and municipal governments gone beyond lacklustre involvement in the provision of subsidized and low-rent housing. The Province made some progress this year, but more must be done, and we need the federal government to join B.C. in this work. Homelessness is a national problem, but B.C. bears the brunt of it because people are mobile within Canada and the weather is less dangerous, so there is strong justification for federal financing. We applaud advances made by the provincial Indigenous Housing Fund which provides housing both on- and off-reserve in First Nations communities and now has 1,165 units in progress. We also recognize the significant strides made by the Rapid Response to Homelessness Initiative which has completed 1,726 units of modular housing and has many more units in progress.

1. The Committee acknowledges the excellent support by staff of the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. We are also grateful for the consistent participation of Minister Simpson and Parliamentary Secretary Elmore throughout our year of meetings and explorations. The co-operation of the provincial government in providing data and administrative support to our work has been essential and is appreciated.

Families, Children and Youth:

In 2019/20, the Province and the First Nations Health Authority allocated \$12.6 million for 29 new mental health and wellness initiatives that includes the participation of 120 First Nation communities across B.C. The Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI) helps eligible single parents receiving income and disability assistance secure employment and stabilize their families. Since inception in 2015, 2,153 parents have enrolled and 1,346 found employment. An evaluation of the duration and types of employment obtained over time is needed to see how many of these parents have secured jobs that provide stable and adequate income for raising a family.

Education:

In 2019, the Province invested \$318 million over four years to remove interest on the B.C. portion of all new and existing student loans, which means an average graduate in 2019 would save \$2,300 in interest over a 10-year repayment period. New programs to advance reconciliation were introduced, from the Framework for Enhanced Student Learning to Trauma-Informed Practice Training for school district staff, with the goal of improving the educational outcomes and completion rates for Indigenous youth.

Employment:

A key measure has been to increase the minimum wage in a stepwise fashion from \$12.65 per hour in 2018. The Province increased the minimum wage in June 2019 to \$13.85 per hour (and in June 2020 to \$14.60 per hour, to be followed in June 2021 to \$15.20 per hour). In all, this is a 20 per cent increase in hourly wages for minimum wage workers since 2018. Roughly seven per cent of paid employees in B.C. (excluding self-employed workers) are paid the minimum wage, and thus benefit from this increase, plus a similar fraction of workers paid near the minimum wage have also benefitted from wage increases.

A series of legislative changes introduced in 2019, after years of advocacy by B.C.'s labour movement and social justice community, will improve fairness and enhance the rights and well-being of workers. These include changes to the Labour Code that make it easier for workers to unionize, and changes to the Employment Standards Act to enhance protections for temporary foreign workers and provide protected leave for those caring for ill family members.

The Province also established a new unpaid job-protected domestic or sexual violence leave of up to 10 days, plus an additional period of up to 15 weeks if a worker, a worker's minor child, or a specified dependent adult is facing domestic or sexual violence. The Province should move to introduce a statutory right to paid sick leave for all workers, and more work needs to be done to address the precarity of work and improve the situation of working poor and under-employed British Columbians.

Income Supports:

On April 1, 2019 the Province increased income and disability assistance rates by \$50 per month for individuals and single parent families and \$100 per month for couples and two-parent families, benefitting approximately 200,000 clients. However, this small increase fell far short of what is needed to provide an adequate monthly income for people, and advocates continue to criticize the Province for failing to prioritize a significant increase in rates. We applaud the halving of MSP premiums in 2019 (with planned elimination of premiums in 2020).

Social Supports:

In November, the Province announced \$2 million in funding to open several new legal clinics around B.C., which will provide clients with free legal advice and services on a range of issues including poverty, housing, immigration and disability. Also, work began to develop three Indigenous Justice Centres in Prince George, Merritt and Prince Rupert, with a focus on criminal law and child welfare and will reflect the unique needs and approaches of Indigenous people in each region. Improved access to legal advice and services for lower income people can help reduce unfairness affecting their housing, income and other essential needs.

Progress towards Legislated Targets

Income poverty refers to the condition of a household having too little income to meet its basic needs. The poverty rate measures the fraction of people that live in such households, where the basic needs threshold is defined by the Market Basket Measure (MBM). And the MBM has proven inadequate at capturing the right range of indicators for Indigenous people and communities. The reduction of income poverty is not the sole objective of the Province in its poverty reduction strategy. Other aspects of well-being, such as housing sufficiency and food security, are very important. However, the Province has legislated goals for poverty rates in B.C. The legislated target for the five-year period beginning on January 1, 2019 is to reduce the poverty rate among all persons by 25 per cent from its 2016 level, and to reduce the poverty rate among persons under 18 years of age by 50 per cent from its 2016 level.

Substantial Progress has been Made

In B.C., the poverty rate (calculated by the MBM) among all persons in 2016 was 12 per cent. By 2018, that rate had dropped to 8.9 per cent, a proportionate reduction of 25.8 per cent. The child poverty rate, that of persons aged under 18, was 12 per cent in 2016. By 2018, that rate had dropped to 6.9 per cent, a proportionate reduction of 42.5 per cent. In terms of numbers of people, this was an overall reduction of 136,000 British Columbians living in poverty since 2016, including 42,000 children.

The Province has engaged in many activities, detailed in this report, to improve lives and reduce deprivation, including actions to reduce income poverty. Such actions include, for example, increasing welfare benefit levels. The major actor in reducing

income poverty over the period 2015 to 2019 was the federal government, through the implementation of the Canada Child Benefit in 2016 (which specifically targets child poverty) and increases to other income support programs. These increases were permanent, which gives the Province a good foundation upon which to act, for example, through increased income supports for households with children.

The legislated targets offer measurable benchmarks that can be used to assess progress. However, we believe that although attention to income poverty is a meritorious policy goal, it should not be held as a sole objective. For example, this Committee believes that the recent progress made in the area of public housing is very important in reducing material deprivation in large numbers of households. However, it is not reflected in income poverty measures at all.

While substantial progress on income poverty has been made, we note the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the period immediately following this reporting period. As the federal and provincial responses to the pandemic have included massive temporary income support, and the pandemic has induced a massive decrease in both aggregate demand and supply, it is difficult to foresee how these will interact in terms of poverty rates for 2020 and 2021. Poverty rates can fluctuate from year to year with changes in the economy, employment rates, and the cost of living – and in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, it is possible that poverty rates will increase again over the next couple of years.

Commitment to Reconciliation

We believe the strategy reflects a commitment to

- reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples,
- the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and
- the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Province is to be commended for its own adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2019. Efforts to particularly focus on the disproportionate rate of poverty among Indigenous people is noted throughout the six areas above, but we also want to highlight three additional actions that reflect these commitments.

- We applaud the end of issuing “birth alerts,” a practice that allowed hospitals and child welfare agencies to flag mothers deemed to be high-risk without their knowledge: birth alerts disproportionately affected Indigenous women in B.C.
- Work by the Ministry of Children and Family Development to making changes to the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and starting to shift jurisdiction over some child welfare matters to First Nations.
- We welcome the draft First Nations Justice Strategy and a similar work that was done with Métis Nation BC to develop a Métis Justice Strategy.

These actions signal important cultural shifts and progress on our reconciliation journey. We note the seismic shift in understanding of colonization and structural racism that began post-reporting period brought on by the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of Chantel Moore, a young Indigenous woman, on a “wellness check” by police. Systemic racism can no longer be tolerated and ignored.

We are committed to bring changes and improvements in programs to address poverty going forward, as we understand poverty affects Indigenous people and racialized people both more broadly and more deeply. This requires systemic and foundational changes to begin to resolve. When the data from the 2021 census becomes available, it will be important to see how income poverty rates for Indigenous people (recognizing census data for this population is poor because participation is very low) and racialized people were affected during the early years of B.C.'s poverty reduction plan.

Respectfully submitted by the Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee:

Catherine Ludgate (chair),

Sarah Brownlee,

Cheryl Casimer,

Zahra Esmail,

Murry Krause,

Rosanna McGregor,

Bradley (Brad) Mills,

Adrienne Montani,

Tabitha Naismith,

Krishna Pendakur,

Lissa Smith,

Stephanie Smith,

Caitlin Wright

Executive Summary

British Columbia's first ever poverty reduction strategy, TogetherBC, was released in March 2019, following the unanimous passing of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* in November 2018. The Act requires an annual report on the previous calendar year that describes action to implement the poverty reduction strategy, the effects of the strategy on poverty reduction and progress made towards legislated targets to reduce B.C.'s poverty rates. Based on 2016 numbers, B.C.'s overall poverty rate is to be reduced by 25 per cent and B.C.'s child poverty rate is to be reduced by 50 per cent by 2024. The annual report is to be completed and publicly posted by October 1st each year. This is the first annual report on TogetherBC and it reports on actions taken from January 1 to December 31, 2019.

POVERTY REDUCTION TARGETS

In 2016, there were 557,000 people in B.C. living in poverty, 99,000 of them children. TogetherBC represents a starting point for delivering on the targets introduced in the Act. Market Basket Measure (MBM) numbers from 2018 show that progress has already been made. The overall poverty rate in B.C. decreased from 12 per cent to 8.9 per cent, a 25.8 per cent reduction. The child poverty rate decreased from 12 per cent to 6.9 per cent, a 42.5 per cent reduction. This is an overall reduction of 136,000 British Columbians living in poverty since 2016, including 42,000 children. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has had unprecedented social and economic impacts on British Columbians. The 2020 Annual Report will address the effects of this pandemic on people living in poverty and the actions taken in response.

PROGRESS INDICATORS

The MBM rates do not capture the full scope or complexity of poverty in B.C. This report describes several core indicators which look beyond income to consider how poverty is impacted by social, economic and environmental factors. Appendix B of this report provides figures related to government initiatives, graphs and more information about indicators and trends.

SIX PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

TogetherBC is built on the guiding principles of affordability, opportunity, social inclusion and reconciliation. The strategy brings together solutions to poverty from across government and across society.

This annual report describes actions taken throughout B.C. to advance progress in poverty reduction in six priority areas: housing; supports for families, children and youth; education; employment; income supports and social supports.

Housing – Government provided thousands of units of supportive housing, but the effect that this will have on homelessness rates is yet to be determined.

Families, Children and Youth – In 2019, more than 27,700 received child care for \$10 per day or less for at least one month. The *Youth Criminal Justice Act* was amended to enhance supports for youth at risk, and government released *A Pathway to Hope*, a 10-year vision for mental health and addictions care.

Education – In 2019, government invested \$318 million over four years to remove interest on the B.C. portion of all student loans, saving an average graduate in 2019 \$2,300 in interest over a 10-year repayment period.

Employment – On June 1, 2019, B.C.'s minimum wage was increased to \$13.85 per hour benefitting nearly seven per cent of paid employees. Changes to labour and employment laws provide unpaid leave to victims of domestic or sexual violence.

Income Supports – On April 1, 2019 income and disability assistance rates were increased by \$50 per month for individuals and single-parent families and \$100 per month for couples and two-parent families.

Social Supports – In 2019, government made policy changes to make it easier for people to access income assistance and launched a poverty reduction planning and action grant program for local governments. Investments were also made to improve access to legal services, arts programming and sports programming.

While progress was made in many areas, there is still more work that needs to be done. The Minister's Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee note this in their commentary.

CONCLUSION

Reducing poverty is a cross-government initiative. A detailed listing of programs that contribute to poverty reduction broken down by ministry and Crown agency is contained in Appendix C.

Progress made in many areas to reduce poverty has the potential to be undone by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This will be reflected in the 2020 annual report.

Introduction

In 2016, there were 557,000 people living below the poverty line in British Columbia - 99,000 of them children. At that time, B.C. was the only province without a poverty reduction strategy. While the province enjoyed a strong and thriving economy, it had one of the highest poverty rates in the country, with 12 per cent of the population living in poverty - many while working.

Poverty is a systemic and complex problem that won't be solved with simple and antiquated tropes like 'get a job'. With a minimum wage that had not kept up with rising costs, few opportunities for people to get ahead, and years of cuts to the programs and services people rely on, too many were left behind. Housing prices continued to skyrocket, and renters were often forced into short-term leases that landlords used as a loophole to allow for unlimited rent increases.

In summer 2017, the B.C. government took real action to reduce poverty in British Columbia and began work on developing the province's first poverty reduction strategy. Recognizing both the need to engage with those living in poverty about their priorities, and to give people immediate relief, government began with an immediate hike to both disability and income assistance rates, the first in ten years.

Other early actions that helped form the bedrock of the province's first poverty reduction strategy included protections from unfair rent increases, a fair path to a \$15 minimum wage and improved supports for those at high risk of poverty, such as former youth in care.

Living in poverty can mean experiencing food insecurity, homelessness, accumulating debt and facing stigma. Poverty is also linked to mental illness and substance use, which can exacerbate the circumstances of poverty or be worsened by living in poverty.

Tackling poverty isn't just about addressing income inequality – it is about building a fairer society. Poverty doesn't affect all people equally. People who are marginalized are much more likely to live in poverty – and for Indigenous people, poverty is a result of colonization and displacement, which continues today in the form of racism and discrimination.

Government passed the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* ("the Act") in November 2018, and in March 2019, the Province released *TogetherBC – British Columbia's Poverty Reduction Strategy*, which seeks to reduce the overall poverty rate by 25 per cent and the child (under 18) poverty rate by 50 per cent by 2024, as legislated by the Act.

The Act requires that an annual report on the poverty reduction strategy be produced by October 1, of each year, beginning in 2020. This is the first annual report and it reports on the 2019 calendar year (January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019). The Act also requires the annual report to describe (a) the actions taken to implement the strategy; (b) the effects of the strategy on poverty reduction; and (c) progress made towards the targets.

This annual report shares information about the efforts taken and progress made toward reducing poverty in B.C. and making life better in six priority areas: housing; families, children and youth; education; employment; income supports and social supports.

The Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to provide advice on poverty reduction and prevention, has also provided independent commentary on the actions taken to reduce poverty over the 2019 calendar year. The committee's commentary is included at the beginning of this report.

Measuring Progress

Poverty Reduction Targets

The Act requires government to reduce the overall poverty rate in British Columbia by 25 per cent and the child (under 18) poverty rate by 50 per cent by 2024.

The Act and TogetherBC are based on the 2016 MBM numbers, Canada's Official Poverty Line.² The MBM reflects the cost of a 'basket' of goods and services representing a modest, basic standard of living in Canada. The measure includes five components: costs for food, clothing, transportation, shelter and other expenses.

In 2016, B.C. had an overall poverty rate of 12 per cent, which was the second highest overall rate in Canada (see Table 1). B.C.'s child poverty rate was 12 per cent, the fifth highest child poverty rate in Canada (see Table 2).

Since then, poverty rates in B.C. have gone down. Between 2016 and 2018 (the most recent data available), the overall poverty rate in British Columbia decreased from 12 per cent to 8.9 per cent, a 25.8 per cent reduction. The child poverty rate decreased from 12 per cent to 6.9 per cent, a 42.5 per cent reduction. This is an overall reduction of 136,000 British Columbians living in poverty since 2016, including 42,000 children.

It is important to note that the MBM does not reflect the circumstances of poverty for Indigenous communities. Government is committed to working with the First Nations Leadership Council, and Indigenous organizations, to develop meaningful measures for Indigenous communities over the next year.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In 2018 Statistics Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada began a comprehensive review to update the base measure established in 2008-2010. This process resulted in changes to the MBM that better reflect current living expenses and consumption patterns. The data for the 2018-base MBM was released on September 8, 2020. Consequently, this report will still present the 2008-base MBM data that was used during the 2019 calendar year. The next report, to be released by October 2021, will use the 2018-base MBM.

2 Data for the MBM is reported with a two-year lag. This means that data from 2016 was used as a baseline for progress when BC's Poverty Reduction Strategy Act was passed in 2018.

Table 1. Incidence of Low Income by Economic Family - MBM (2008 Base)³

All Persons	Incidence (%)				Ranking (Higher Number is Better)		
	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2016-2018	2016	2017	2018
Canada	10.6	9.5	8.7	-17.9%	..	..	..
BC	12.0	10.3	8.9	-25.8%	2	2	6
NL	10.8	9.7	9.7	-10.2%	6	5	2
PEI	11.3	10.1	9.1	-19.5%	5	4	5
NS	12.9	12.8	10.3	-20.2%	1	1	1
NB	11.8	9.7	7.9	-33.1%	3	5	8
QC	8.6	9.0	7.9	-8.1%	9	8	8
ON	11.8	10.2	9.5	-19.5%	3	3	3
MB	9.4	8.7	9.3	-1.1%	7	9	4
SK	9.2	9.5	8.8	-4.3%	8	7	7
AB	8.6	6.8	7.3	-15.1%	9	10	10

Table 2. Incidence of Low Income by Children Under 18 - MBM (2008 Base)

Children	Incidence (%)				Ranking (Higher Number is Better)		
	2016	2017	2018	% Change 2016-2018	2016	2017	2018
Canada	11.0	9.0	8.2	-25.5%	..	..	..
BC	12.0	9.8	6.9	-42.5%	5	5	7
NL	11.7	10.6	9.0	-23.1%	7	3	4
PEI	15.4	9.1	..	..	1	8	..
NS	14.0	17.1	12.1	-13.6%	3	1	1
NB	14.3	13.1	7.9	-44.8%	2	2	6
QC	8.2	8.4	5.7	-30.5%	9	9	9
ON	13.2	9.6	10.0	-24.2%	4	6	3
MB	11.9	9.5	11.3	-5.0%	6	7	2
SK	10.7	10.3	8.2	-23.4%	8	4	5
AB	7.3	5.0	6.4	-12.3%	10	10	8

³ Statistics Canada. Low income statistics by age, sex and economic family type. 11-10-0135-01

Depth of Poverty

The depth of poverty measures the gap between the average income of a person living in poverty and the MBM threshold, to show how far they are below the poverty line. Deep poverty is defined as having income that is below 75 per cent of the poverty line.

In 2016, 6.7 per cent of British Columbians lived with income below 75 per cent of the MBM threshold, including 5.5 per cent of children. In 2018, deep poverty had decreased by nearly one-third to 4.6 per cent for all persons and by more than half to 2.2 per cent for children⁴.

In 2016, the average person living in poverty was only able to afford 60.5 per cent of the MBM of basic goods and services (39.5 per cent below the poverty line). In 2018, the average person living in poverty had an income that was 63.2 per cent of the MBM threshold (36.8 per cent below the MBM threshold), a slight improvement of 2.7 percentage points since 2016.

The depth of poverty for families with children improved significantly between 2016 and 2018, largely the result of the implementation of the Canada Child Benefit. In 2016, the average low-income family with children had incomes 66.6 per cent of the MBM threshold (33.4 per cent below), compared to 73.6 (26.4 per cent below) in 2018.

Core Progress Indicators

The scope and complexity of poverty is deeper than the story told by the MBM poverty rates. People's experience of poverty is influenced by a variety of social, economic and environmental factors. This report uses several core indicators which, when looked at together with the MBM rates, paint an overall picture of progress on poverty reduction efforts in B.C. Other data related to the effects of government action on reducing poverty are also included in Appendix B⁵ of this report.

Progress is also reflected qualitatively in the experiences of those impacted by the strategy – in the stories shared by communities, families and individuals living in poverty. Those voices have been emphasized to show how the actions taken to reduce poverty have made a difference in the lives of British Columbians.

Where possible, 2016 data has been compared to the most recent available data to support comparability in future annual reports. This aligns with the 2016 MBM baseline used to determine the legislated poverty rate targets. Due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, some data sets were unavailable at the time this report was produced. As a result, future annual reports may include additional or adjusted progress indicators.

4 Statistics Canada. 2020. Special tabulation, based on Canadian Income Survey, 2018

5 Indicators and program statistics include quantitative data from a variety of sources, such as Statistics Canada reports and provincial government programs (ministry and Crown agency reports). Numbers provided by provincial government programs are current, though frequently follow a fiscal rather than calendar year.

Most of the indicators outlined below are influenced by a variety of factors – such as the relationship between household food insecurity, income and food prices – that will not appear to be directly correlated to the MBM rates. Our overall poverty rates can decrease while other indicators show no change or even worsen. Some of the indicators will require several years of progress before showing improvements in their respective areas. For example, while obtaining employment will have an immediate effect on a person’s life, it takes many years of improved living circumstances to show progress in areas such as early childhood development and homelessness. Consequently, the full story of the 2019 actions described in this report will not be told until subsequent annual reports.

Progress Indicator Dashboard			
Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent Available Data (up to December 31, 2019)	Trends
<p>Households in Core Housing Need⁶</p> <p>Percentage of households (off-reserve) who have a core housing need.</p> <p>Determined by assessing whether a family or individual live in acceptable housing, and if household income is adequate to afford suitable housing in their community.</p>	14.9 per cent (2016)	14.9 per cent (2016)	n/a New data will be available after 2021.
<p>Homelessness Rates⁷</p> <p>The approximate number of British Columbians experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>This is based on point-in-time homelessness counts (PiT counts) and shelter data in communities across B.C. This broad approach provides coverage of more than 85 per cent of the province by population. PiT counts provide a snapshot of homelessness but are considered to underrepresent actual numbers.</p> <p>PiT counts are planned every two years.</p>	7,655 individuals identified as experiencing homelessness (2018)	7,655 individuals identified as experiencing homelessness (2018)	n/a <i>* In March 2020, PiT counts were completed in 13 communities across B.C., while the remaining 15 counts were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.</i>

6 Core Housing Need, 2016 Census of Population, 2016001. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/chn-biml/index-eng.cfm>

7 The Homelessness Services Association of BC, Urban Matters, and BC Non-Profit Housing Association (2018). 2018 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C. Prepared for BC Housing. Burnaby, BC: Metro Vancouver.

Progress Indicator Dashboard			
Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent Available Data (up to December 31, 2019)	Trends
<p>Early Development Instrument (EDI)⁸</p> <p>Percentage of children in kindergarten considered vulnerable on one or more EDI scales.</p> <p>The EDI measures kindergarteners' ability to meet developmental expectations in five areas. Children considered vulnerable on the EDI are more likely to experience poverty as adults. Data is collected annually.</p>	32.2 per cent (2016)	33.4 per cent (2019)	<p>Area for Improvement</p> <p>The rate of children considered vulnerable increased by 3.7 per cent (1.2 percentage points).</p>
<p>Unemployment Rate⁹</p> <p>Percentage of people 15 years and older in the labour force (employed, unemployed but searching for work) who are unemployed.</p>	6.0 per cent ¹⁰ (2016)	4.7 per cent (2019)	<p>Progress</p> <p>The proportion of people who were unemployed decreased by 21.7 per cent (1.3 percentage points).</p>

8 Human Early Learning Partnership. EDI BC. Early Development Instrument British Columbia, 2016-2019 Wave 7 provincial report. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, Faculty of Medicine, School of Population and Public Health; 2019 Nov.

9 Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0287-01 Labour force characteristics, monthly, seasonally adjusted and trend-cycle, last 5 months

10 Issue 17-163: 2016 Census: Highlights from the Labour in Canada Release. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/data/statistics/infoline/infoline-2017/17-163-2016-census-labour>

Progress Indicator Dashboard			
Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent Available Data (up to December 31, 2019)	Trends
<p>Household Food Insecurity¹¹ Percentage of food insecure households in B.C. Household food insecurity can be defined by the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. It affects an individual's physical and mental health across the lifespan.¹²</p>	12.3 per cent (2015/16)	12.4 per cent (2017/18)	<p>No Significant Change The proportion of households experiencing food insecurity increased by 0.8 per cent (0.1 percentage points)</p>
<p>Sense of Belonging to Community¹³ Percentage of British Columbians 12 years of age and older who say they have a strong or very strong sense of belonging to their community.</p>	70.7 per cent (2015/16)	69.9 per cent (2017/18)	<p>No Significant Change The percentage of people who have a strong or very strong sense of community belonging decreased by 1 per cent (0.8 percentage points).</p>

11 Source: Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0385-01 Household food security by living arrangement. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1310038501-eng>

12 PHSa (2016). Priority health equity indicators for British Columbia: Household food insecurity indicator report. Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1186-PHS-Priority-health-equity-indicators-WEB.pdf>.

13 Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey Public Use Master File, 2015-16, 2017-18.

B.C.'s Commitment to Reconciliation

Government is committed to working in partnership with Indigenous Peoples to make real progress on reconciliation. Together, we made history in the fall of 2019 when we unanimously passed legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) – the first province or territory in Canada, and one of the first in the world, to do so. The B.C. *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, developed in collaboration with the First Nations Leadership Council, provides a path forward on reconciliation – one that respects the human rights of Indigenous people and creates clarity and predictability for all people in British Columbia.

The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* requires that the strategy reflect a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the UN Declaration.

Government policies that worked to eliminate Indigenous culture, language, economies and systems of governance have intergenerational effects on the health, well-being and wealth of Indigenous people in B.C. Despite these inequities, Indigenous communities remain strong and resilient. This means that for Indigenous communities, the scope of poverty reduction includes having the means to generate their own economy, considerations for self-determination, improved access to justice and culturally appropriate wellness supports. Addressing the ongoing effects of colonialism is fundamental to the poverty reduction strategy.

Amendments made to the *Gaming Control Act* in 2019 will provide B.C. First Nations with seven per cent of the BC Lottery Corporation's net income for 23 years to support self-government and self-determination, strong healthy communities and services that make life better for families. This translates to approximately \$100 million per year; the agreement is expected to result in approximately \$3 billion in revenues shared with First Nations by 2045.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process, and the Province remains committed to strengthening relationships with Indigenous governments, leaders, organizations and communities across British Columbia. The Province will continue to work in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples to expand opportunities for self-determination, to strengthen communities and implement the poverty reduction strategy.

Gender-Based Analysis Plus: Action on Equity

Poverty is related to the inequities experienced between different social, cultural and economic groups. These inequities impact people's lives in every way, particularly their physical, mental and social well-being. Addressing these complex, interrelated challenges requires a comprehensive and multi-layered approach.

Gender Based Analysis Plus, or GBA+, is an analytical tool that considers people's multiple intersecting identity factors, such as gender, race, age and socio-economic status. Policies, programs and legislation need to account for these differences and recognize that social issues, including poverty, are inherently intersectional. Using a GBA+ lens means considering how poverty is experienced differently by each of these groups.

For example, consideration should be made for how gender discrimination in the *Indian Act* disadvantages First Nations women. Until 1985, women with Indian status who married someone without status lost their status rights. Men, on the other hand, did not lose Indian status in the same way. This has greatly impacted gender roles for Indigenous communities and continues to affect generations of women.

As a result of using GBA+, the *Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* commits government to consider 13 different population groups when developing and updating the poverty reduction strategy. Many of these groups are more likely to live in poverty or be at risk of poverty because of the inequities they face. The population groups are:

- Children
- Youth
- Women and persons of all genders
- Indigenous Peoples
- Persons living with disabilities
- LGBTQ2S+ persons
- Seniors
- Persons living in rural and remote communities
- Immigrants and refugees
- Persons and families working and earning low incomes
- Persons living with or fleeing abuse
- Persons living with mental illness or addiction
- Persons of colour

In 2019, government made several investments intended to address inequities experienced by these key population groups, while recognizing that significant work needs to be done to ensure everyone feels included and safe within their communities.

Re-establishing the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner

In May 2019, government appointed B.C.'s first independent human rights commissioner. The Office of the Human Rights Commissioner works to prevent discrimination and inequality by providing human rights education, research and guidance to all British Columbians on rights and responsibilities under the BC Human Rights Code.

Giving Voice to Indigenous Women

In 2018/19 and 2019/20, the Province provided \$546,000 to the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women Giving Voice Initiative, funding a total of 54 projects. Giving Voice projects promote healing from gender-based violence by providing safe spaces for Indigenous women and girls to speak about issues of violence and create community-based solutions, both on- and off-reserve. Projects include traditional activities like knowledge workshops and healing circles, as well as community-focused projects, such as cultural retreats, land-based experiences such as food harvesting, and workshops on healthy relationships.

Community Highlight: *Giving Voice to Indigenous Women*

The Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH), based in Victoria, has been helping Indigenous women who are homeless or at risk of being homeless to find housing with Indigenous cultural supports that promote healing and self-determination. Following the 2018 Point-in-Time homeless count, an emerging need was identified to *"conduct research on the real-life safety situations of the women who are in violent relationships exacerbated by addictions – how to improve engagement, support and safety."* Through a grant from Giving Voice, more than 30 women, including youth, young mothers, women at risk and women living in poverty, came together in a welcoming and culturally safe environment to participate in a focus group, cultural activities and a meal with the support of an elder and facilitator.

Juanita was struggling with her addictions and just coming out of a violent relationship when she participated in the Giving Voice Indigenous Women's Retreat *"Culture is Healing"* in June 2019. At the retreat, she found healing through both the land and the ACEH community. After the retreat, she became more involved in the ACEH community, and shared how her situation has changed

"I'm now housed and safer and I'm recovering well from heavy drug use and from my last very abusive relationship. I've got some new friends and connections since the past year."

-Juanita

Accessibility Legislation Consultations

Government is developing B.C.'s first accessibility and inclusion legislation, which will work to identify, remove and prevent barriers experienced by people with disabilities. A comprehensive province-wide public consultation was held in fall 2019 to engage with the disability community and ensure this process is in line with the principle of "nothing about us without us." Thousands of British Columbians shared their ideas, as well as personal stories of struggles and successes living with disabilities and navigating barriers to access and inclusion.

Resilience BC

Systemic racism can be a key contributor to poverty, impacting British Columbians with multiple intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity. In 2019, the Resilience BC anti-racism network was launched. Resilience BC offers a multi-faceted approach to improve community capacity to respond to hate activity and address systemic and institutionalized racism throughout the province. Through a central provincial hub, the program connects community organizations with information, supports and training to respond to and prevent future incidents of racism and hate. These community organizations lead anti-racism and anti-hate work locally to build awareness of what comprises racism and hate; mobilize their communities to respond to hate incidents in a supportive and collaborative way; and facilitate discussions and anti-racism education opportunities. The Province has invested \$540,000 annually in Resilience BC.

To inform the new program, government supported 21 community dialogues and small group consultations with more than 300 community leaders throughout the province in 2019 – including focused sessions for leaders who identified as Indigenous, Black, Chinese-Canadian, South Asian, Jewish, Muslim and LGBTQ2S+. Participants shared stories of how racism and hate have contributed to the social and economic marginalization of many community members and contributed ideas on ways this could change.

Trans+ Community Consultations

Following the province-wide engagement on poverty reduction, a separate consultation was conducted with the Trans+ community. Trans+ includes transgender, transsexual, nonbinary, genderqueer, Two-Spirit, agender and other gender identities. Consultations were held with Trans+ people in communities around B.C., including Prince George, Nelson, Victoria and Vancouver to learn more about their experiences of poverty. One session focused on Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) participants, who experience intersecting forms of discrimination. A total of 63 Trans+ people attended the consultations.

Participants provided insight on their experiences with employment, housing, medical services and mental health. They spoke about experiences of discrimination from employers and a lack of access to stable housing or to medical services. Due to negative experiences with the medical system, Trans+ people often do not seek out health care services, leading to worse health and deeper poverty. Furthermore, poverty and transphobia increase social isolation, which in turn aggravates mental health issues.

Participants provided a set of recommendations to reduce poverty among Trans+ people. The recommendations included: providing accessible, culturally safe medical and mental health care, and covering more medical supports for transitioning; providing more housing supports for Trans+ people, including emergency and transitional housing; creating more meaningful learning and employment; supporting diversity in the workplace; and developing greater intersectional training and education about Trans+ people for employers, educators, front-line service providers and the public. A copy of the consultation report is available online (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/initiatives-plans-strategies/poverty-reduction-strategy/2020-trans-plus-report.pdf>).

Additional Indicator	Baseline Data	Most Recent Available Data (as of Dec 31, 2019)	Trend
Number of households that benefit from provincial housing programs for affordable and supportive housing ²³	105,140 (2016/17)	110,464 (2018/19)	Progress The number of households increased by 5,324 (5.1 per cent)
Number of supportive housing units created ²⁴	963 (2016/17)	2,669 (2018/19)	Progress The number of supportive housing units increased by 1,706 (177.2 per cent)
Number of households receiving rental assistance in the private market ²⁵ This measure includes two programs: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) and Rental Assistance Program (RAP).	31,329 (2016/17)	33,494 (2018/19)	Progress The number of households increased by 2,165 (6.9 per cent)
Number of children served by Childcare BC	Initiative started in 2019	More than 27,700 children received child care for \$10 per day or less for at least one month (2019)	No Reported Change
Average monthly number of funded licensed child care spaces ²⁶	108,110 (2016/17)	114,672 (2018/19)	Progress The number of funded spaces increased by 6,562 (6.1 per cent)

23 Source: BC Housing Annual Service Plan Report 2018-2019
<https://www.bchousing.org/about/corporate-reports-plans>

24 Source: BC Housing Annual Service Plan Report 2018-2019
<https://www.bchousing.org/about/corporate-reports-plans>

25 Source: BC Housing Annual Service Plan Report 2018-2019
<https://www.bchousing.org/about/corporate-reports-plans>

26 MCFD 2018/19 Annual Service Plan Report
https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2018_2019/pdf/ministry/cfd.pdf

Homelessness Rate

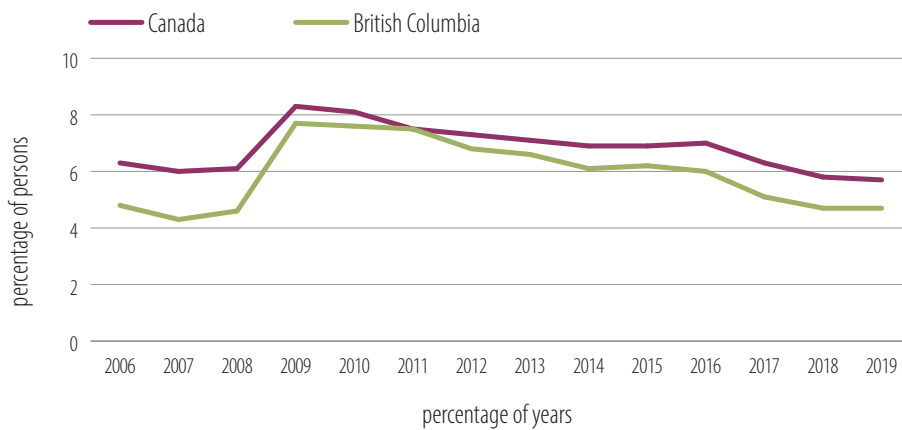
There is a clear link between poverty and homelessness. People experiencing homelessness struggle to afford basic needs such as clothing and food, experience negative impacts to their mental and physical health, and are not able to secure or maintain employment without having these basic needs met. Tracking homelessness rates helps to inform government programs that support vulnerable populations. The homelessness rate in B.C. is determined using point-in-time homelessness counts (PiT counts) and shelter data. PiT counts provide a snapshot of homelessness but are widely considered to be an undercount of actual rates. This broad approach used to measure homelessness covers more than 85 per cent of B.C. by population.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

This indicator reports on the percentage of children in kindergarten considered vulnerable on one or more EDI scales. The EDI is a well-established tool that measures a child’s ability to meet developmental expectations in five areas: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development, and; communication skills and general knowledge. These areas are known to be good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes, and children considered vulnerable on the EDI are more likely to experience poverty as adults.

Unemployment Rate

Increasing opportunities for stable employment is essential to reducing poverty. The unemployment rate for B.C. is reported by Statistics Canada. It shows the percentage of people 15 years and older in the labour force who are unemployed, expressed as a percentage of the labour force.



Household Food Insecurity

Poverty is one of the key contributing factors to food insecurity and reducing poverty can help increase access to safe and nutritious food³⁵. This indicator is reported by Statistics Canada and includes households experiencing marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity. It is based on a set of questions that indicate whether households both with and without children were able to afford the food they needed in the previous 12 months. Food security exists when households have access to affordable, culturally appropriate food. This is often characterized by the availability, accessibility, affordability, adequacy and appropriateness of food choices.

Sense of Community Belonging

British Columbians living in poverty often experience social isolation and a feeling of exclusion from their communities. Stigmatization and social barriers can impact an individual's ability to access housing, employment and other essential services. Research also shows that social isolation can be detrimental to health, while social engagement is associated with positive health outcomes. According to Statistics Canada, a sense of community belonging reflects social engagement and participation within communities. This indicator is used to measure social attachment to the community.

Additional Indicators

Number of Households that Benefit from Provincial Housing Programs for Affordable and Supportive Housing

This indicator reflects the number of individuals and families benefiting from BC Housing's programming. It demonstrates government's commitment to improve the housing situation for low-income British Columbians. Assistance ranges from emergency shelter and homeless outreach, transition houses, safe homes and second stage housing, independent and supportive social housing, rent assistance in the private market, home adaptations for seniors and persons with disabilities, as well as help for first-time homeowners. BC Housing works in partnership with the non-profit, co-op and Indigenous housing sectors to deliver most of these programs.

Number of Supportive Housing Units Created

Supportive housing is subsidized housing with on-site supports. Increases to supportive housing mean more British Columbians can access the supports they need to find and maintain housing stability. This indicator is reported by BC Housing and represents the total number of supportive housing units created in B.C. The creation of supportive housing is funded through multiple initiatives including, but not limited to, the Supportive Housing Fund and the Rapid Response to Homelessness initiative.

35 Ministry of Health Model Core Program Paper: Food Security <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/public-health/healthy-living-and-healthy-communities/food-security-model-core-program-paper-2014.pdf>

Number of Households Receiving Rental Assistance in the Private Market

This measure includes two programs: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) and Rental Assistance Program (RAP). SAFER provides rent supplements to eligible low-income seniors, while RAP provides low-income working families with cash assistance to help with monthly rent payments. These supports are critical to keeping seniors and families housed and prevents British Columbians from falling deeper into poverty.

Number of Children Served by Childcare BC

This indicator includes the approximate number of children receiving child care for \$10 a day or less for at least one month in a calendar year. Support is provided through multiple programs including the Affordable Child Care Benefit, Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative and Universal Child Care Prototypes Sites. Affordable child care allows parents to work or pursue education and training opportunities to better support their families.

Average Monthly Number of Funded Licensed Child Care Spaces

This measure speaks to the average monthly number of licensed spaces with service providers who receive funding through the Child Care Operating Funding Program. It shows how increasing the number of child care spaces contributes to a system of accessible, affordable and quality child care for families, which can lead to better outcomes for children.

Note: There is a time lag between when new spaces receive funds to build or renovate and when they become operational. This time lag could be due to permitting, construction or licensing requirements. Additionally, the measure includes funded licensed child care spaces that are created as a result of other growth in the sector.

High School Six-Year Completion Rate

Young people from low-income families are more likely to leave school because of factors connected to poverty. This includes experiencing food insecurity and the inability to afford school supplies and extracurricular activities that promote success. In addition to the rate being affected by childhood poverty, high school completion is a strong predictor of an individual's income and employment status later in life. People who graduate high school are more likely to be employed full-time and live above the poverty line as adults. The six-year completion rate indicator is based on the proportion of students who graduate from public school in B.C. within six years from the first time they enroll in grade 8, adjusted for migration in and out of the province.

Post-Secondary Participation Rate

With changing labour markets, more jobs are requiring higher levels of training. Vulnerable youth—including Indigenous youth, youth from low-income households, and youth living in rural or remote communities—often have lower post-secondary participation rates. Increasing post-secondary participation can help improve job opportunities and break the cycle of poverty for young people. The post-secondary participation rate is published by Statistics Canada and reflects the total enrolment in a college or university as a percentage of the total population for each age group; the 18-24 age group is used in this report. The rate includes full- and part-time students who were taking a “credit course” that could be counted towards a degree, certificate or diploma. The number of students is based on a monthly average from September to April.

Number of People who have Participated in the Single Parent Employment Initiative

The Single Parent Employment Initiative (SPEI) helps eligible single parents receiving income and disability assistance secure employment. Eligible single parents can access a range of employment services and supports provided through 102 WorkBC Centres across the province. Participants may be eligible for: up to 12 months of funded training for in-demand jobs or a paid work experience placement; child-care costs covered while participating in the program and throughout the first year of employment, and; transit costs to and from school. These supports help single parents to overcome barriers to employment and build better futures for their families.

Number of Former Youth in Care Accessing Tuition Waiver

Many youth in care face adversity and additional barriers to accessing post-secondary education and greater job opportunities. The Tuition Waiver Program waives tuition fees for B.C. students who are former youth in care attending a B.C. public post-secondary institution. This includes Native Education College and eligible union trades training centres. The program was expanded in 2017 and is open to eligible students 19 years of age up to their 27th birthday.

Median After-Tax Family Income

Family income is a measure of the combined incomes of all people sharing a household or place of residence. It includes various forms of income, such as salaries and wages, retirement income and government transfers. Average household income can be used as an indicator for the monetary well-being of a province’s citizens. Mean or median net household income, after taxes and mandatory contributions, are taken as indicators of standard of living, because they include only disposable income and acknowledge people sharing accommodation benefit from pooling at least some of their living costs.

Average Hourly Wage

The average hourly wage is reported by Statistics Canada and represents the average hourly wage for full- and part-time employees over the age of 15 in British Columbia. Changes to the average hourly wage, after controlling for inflation, indicate whether working British Columbians are earning more in comparison to previous years. Full-time and part-time average wages are also presented to control for changes in the mix of employment.

Number of People Served by WorkBC

WorkBC Employment Services help British Columbians find and keep employment, including individuals who face multiple barriers to employment. Services are available to all unemployed or precariously employed B.C. citizens legally eligible to work in B.C. The table below includes total clients served by inclusion group in 2019 (not mutually exclusive).³⁶

Inclusion Group	Total clients served
Youth ³⁷	21,561
Immigrants	15,475
Persons with Disabilities ³⁸	14,455
Indigenous Peoples	8,162
Survivors of Violence and/or Abuse	7,627
Multi-Barriered	5,672
Francophones	1,230
All Inclusion Clients	49,598
All WorkBC Clients	73,540

Percentage of Population on Income or Disability Assistance

The BC Employment and Assistance Program provides financial support to British Columbians in need, including persons with disabilities, lone parent families with young children and persons with significant barriers to employment. In combination with a low unemployment rate, a low rate of dependence on income or disability assistance indicates that even British Columbians with barriers can participate in and benefit from a strong economy.

Number of Families Served by the Canada Child Benefit

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. The program provides important financial supports for families and impacts rates of child poverty.

36 WorkBC Submission to the Poverty Reduction Annual Report, May 2020.

37 WorkBC defines youth as aged 16-30

38 WorkBC defines Persons with Disabilities (PWD) as clients with a PWD designation through BC Employment and Assistance Program or with a confirmed employment-related disability.

Appendix C

Inventory of Government Initiatives that Reduce Poverty

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training		
The B.C. Employer Training Grant	Helps British Columbians access skills training while encouraging employer involvement in training their employees. In 2018/19, the B.C. Employer Training Grant provided funding to over 1,200 employers to support skills training for over 9,500 people. Government invested \$8 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing
The Community Workforce Response Grant program	Provides flexible and timely responses to emerging and urgent labour and skills needs in communities throughout the province. In 2019/20, 68 Community Workforce Response Grant program projects were approved to provide skills training and employment supports to over 1,000 people. Government invested \$10 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing
Sector Labour Market Partnerships (SLMP) program & Early Childhood Educators	The SLMP program funds projects that address sector and regional labour market issues. SLMP has partnered with the Early Childhood Educators of BC to evaluate the Province's Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy. Government made a 4-year (2018-2022) investment of \$1.8 million.	Ongoing
SLMP Program & Skills Ready	The SLMP program partnered with the Construction Foundation of British Columbia to deliver Skills Ready, which supports youth employment by teaching practical workplace skills employers want in new hires. Since 2018, Skills Ready has successfully engaged more than 4,000 youth, 400 educators, and 300 construction, manufacturing, automotive, marine, forestry and oil and gas employers. Government invested \$2.5 million from 2018-2020.	Ongoing
SLMP Program & Federation of Community Social Services BC	SLMP has partnered with the Federation of Community Social Services BC to collect detailed labour market information on service providers providing essential supports to vulnerable populations in BC, including social housing, counselling, substance abuse, and child protection. Government invested \$250,000 over two years from 2018 to 2020.	Ongoing
SLMP Program & First Nations Technology Council	This SLMP project is led by the First Nations Technology Council to conduct labour market research on Indigenous participation in the digital economy. Government invested \$339,316 in 2019/20.	Started in 2019

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training		
Name of Program/ Initiative	Description	Status in 2019
Provincial Tuition Waiver Program (TWP)	This program waives tuition fees for B.C. students who are former youth in care between 19 and up to their 27th birthday who are attending a B.C. public post-secondary institution. The program was expanded significantly in 2017, and since the expansion 1,272 former youth in care students have been supported on TWP, resulting in 3,316 tuition waivers issued.	Ongoing
SLMP Program & Indigenous Tourism BC	This SLMP project is led by Indigenous Tourism BC to conduct labour market research and develop a workforce development strategy specific to the unique needs and challenges of the Indigenous tourism sector. Government invested \$122,050 in 2019/20.	Started in 2019
Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG)	The AUG supports eligible low-income students in adult upgrading programs to complete or upgrade their education by paying the cost of books, transportation, mandatory fees and unsubsidized child care. In 2018/19, the AUG provided financial support to 4,746 students to access upgrading programs. Government invested \$7.6 million in 2019.	Ongoing
Community Adult Literacy Program	The CALP is a community-based literacy initiative to promote and deliver adult, family and Aboriginal literacy programs through one-to-one and small group classes across the province. In 2019/20, CALP supported 94 community literacy programs in over 80 communities. Government invested \$2.4 million in 2019.	Ongoing
Proposed Tripartite Indigenous Skills Training and Employment Committee	In 2019 there were exploratory discussions on the creation of a tripartite Indigenous skills training and employment committee with the Province, First Nations Leadership Council and the federal government to better coordinate programming and funding, support Indigenous capacity and self-government, and address the needs of Indigenous people related to skills training and employment.	Started in 2019
Aboriginal Community-Based Training Partnerships (ABCTP) Program	ACBTP provides funding for post-secondary education and training for Indigenous participants in community and creates a pathway for participants to ladder into further post-secondary education or skills training and employment. In 2019/20, there were 34 ACBTP projects serving 341 Indigenous people and 81 First Nations communities. Government invested \$2 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing
Indigenous Skills Training Development Fund (ISTDF)	ISTDF provides funding to Indigenous communities to increase access to skills training and education for Indigenous learners in community, and acquire the skills needed to respond to emerging labour market opportunities. In 2019/20, the ISTDF supported more than 63 Indigenous communities through 32 agreements. Government invested \$10 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training

University of Victoria Indigenous Law Program	Government provided funding to the University of Victoria to support the first four-year, dual degree program in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders. Each year 25 students will be enrolled. Government invested \$900,000 in 2019, with continual funding of \$1.8 million starting in 2021/22.	Ongoing
Indigenous-Focused Teacher Education	Government is supporting Indigenous-focused teacher education to better prepare students to meet the needs of Indigenous learners in K-12, and to help non-Indigenous learners in K-12 have a better understanding of Indigenous Peoples and the impacts of colonial histories. Government invested \$2.7 million in 2019.	Ongoing
Indigenous Emergency Assistance Fund	Government provides Emergency Assistance Funding to more than 3,700 Indigenous students annually to assist with unforeseen financial needs, such as medical expenses or family emergencies that require travel home. Government invested \$604,900 in 2019.	Ongoing
Aboriginal Service Plans	Government provides funding to support Aboriginal Service Plans at public post-secondary institutions which foster partnerships between institutions and local Indigenous communities. Government invested \$4.4 million in 2019.	Ongoing
Supports to Institutions without Aboriginal Service Plans	Government supported 14 post-secondary institutions to implement new programs, activities and services for Indigenous learners. Government invested \$1.75 million in 2019.	Started in 2019
Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English Learning Language (ELL) Programs	These programs are designed to improve learners' skills in order to bridge into post-secondary education and/or find new or better employment. In 2018/19, as many as 20,000 students benefitted from the Government's investment to support greater access to ABE and ELL. Government invested \$18.5 million in 2018/19 and \$24 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing
BladeRunners Program	Targets at-risk youth aged 15-30 and provides life-skills and job readiness training, job placement, and monitoring to help at-risk youth obtain and sustain full-time employment in a range of industries. In 2019/20, the BladeRunners program will serve approximately 1,018 participants in all B.C. regions. Government invested \$4.3 million in 2019/20.	Ongoing

Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training		
Name of Program/ Initiative	Description	Status in 2019
Removing Interest on Student Loans	<p>In 2019, government invested \$318 million over four years to remove interest on the B.C. portion of all new and existing student loans. This means an average graduate in 2019 would save \$2,300 in interest over a 10-year repayment period. In 2019 there were approximately 200,000 B.C. student loans outstanding. Borrowers collectively saved about \$22 million in interest payments on these loans in 2019-20.</p> <p>In 2018-19, B.C. students accessed approximately \$734 million in federal and provincial funding. This includes more than \$196 million in provincial loans and \$54 million in non-repayable grants.</p>	Completed in 2019
Industry Training Authority (ITA)	In 2019, government funded over 27,000 apprenticeship and foundation training seats at public and private institutions through the Industry Training Authority. Budget 2019 included an increase of \$3.5 million over three years for the ITA to support trades training.	Ongoing
Co-op and work-integrated learning programs	In June 2019, the province invested \$9 million to expand and support co-op and work-integrated learning programs at post-secondary institutions throughout B.C.	Ongoing
Training for women and other under-represented groups	In 2019, government announced \$12.4 million to support seven new programs to help 2,036 women and other under-represented groups access opportunities for pre-apprenticeship training, apprenticeship services and employment.	Ongoing
Skills training for survivors of violence and abuse	Government announced new funding to expand programming for survivors of violence and abuse. Programs will include skills training, counselling and other supports to help participants break the cycle of abuse and overcome obstacles to employment. Programs and supports will include individual and group counselling and coaching, child care, and developing short-term and long-term goals for personal and economic success.	Ongoing
Older Workers 55+ program	Older workers can face barriers to employment, including a lack of technical skills and training opportunities, and an unfamiliarity with current hiring practices. In 2019, government provided new funding to support British Columbians who need support to build a new skill set to re-enter the workforce or transition careers.	Ongoing
Open Education Resources (OER)	In April 2019, government announced its single biggest investment ever in open education resources committing \$3 million to develop OER and OER-related support services, online infrastructure, and research that impact a broad range of educational programs. Approximately 130,000 students in B.C. have saved over \$13 million since the open textbook project was launched in 2012.	Ongoing

Ministry of Agriculture		
B.C. Land Matching Program (BCLMP)	BCLMP provides land matching and business support services for new and established farmers. Since the pilot launch in 2016, the B.C. Land Matching Program has helped 47 farmers for a total of 55 matches. Government invested \$370,000 in 2019.	Ongoing
B.C. Agri-Business Planning Program	Agri-Business Planning provides specialized business planning services for food producers and processors. Since 2018, the B.C. Agri-Business Planning Program has supported 93 B.C. food producers and processors receive business planning services. Government invested \$255,000 (from AGRI) in 2019.	Ongoing
B.C. Indigenous Agriculture Development Program (IADP)	Provides agriculture opportunities assessments and specialized financial and business planning services for the food and agriculture industry. Government invested \$94,763 (from AGRI) in 2019.	Ongoing
Community Greenhouse Toolkit	Government developed a toolkit consisting of a checklist and a one-to two-day workshop to support Indigenous communities make informed decisions about community greenhouse investments.	Started in 2019

Ministry of Attorney General		
Name of Program/ Initiative	Description	Status in 2019
BC Family Maintenance Agency (BCFMA)	In November 2019, the BCFMA, a new crown corporation, successfully took over operations of the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program (FMEP). The FMEP program enables over \$200 million in collection and disbursement to about 37,000 families on an annual basis, with more than 53,000 children entitled to child support through the program.	Completed in 2019
Justice Access Centres (JACs)	JACs help people find early and affordable solutions by providing self-help and information services; dispute resolution and mediation options; limited legal advice; access to community resources and agencies; and courses, presentations and publications. In 2018/19, JAC Self-Help Resource Rooms provided over 10,000 services. JAC clients were assisted with nearly 2,200 civil issues.	Ongoing
ICBC's Rate Affordability Action Plan	ICBC's Rate Affordability Action Plan (RAAP) is focused on providing fair, affordable rates for British Columbians. In April 2019, major improvements in accident benefits increased the care available for anyone injured in a crash. Without RAAP, one-time vehicle insurance rate increases of up to 40% would have been required.	Completed in 2019
Indigenous Communities Driver Training	ICBC was approached by the Haisla Nation to help facilitate Haisla community members obtain their driver's licences. ICBC worked with All Nations Driving School and the Haisla Nation to remove key barriers for driving students in remote communities. Since 2018, the joint ICBC/Haisla Nation driver training initiative has enabled 203 Indigenous individuals from remote communities to secure driver's licences or has put them in the process of doing so.	Ongoing
New Funding for Legal Clinics	In November 2019, the Province announced new funding to hire lawyers and legal assistants at several newly established legal clinics around BC that will be able to offer no cost legal advice on issues including poverty, housing, immigration and disability and secure counsel in certain related legal proceedings they may be involved in.	Announced in 2019
Parents Legal Centres (PLCs)	PLCs provide early and collaborative services to parents when a child is at risk of removal or has already been removed. The PLC model, piloted in Vancouver in 2015, has expanded to 10 locations. The pilot site has had success in assisting families with child protections issues, with almost half of the families assisted being Indigenous.	Ongoing

